

**Washington State
Wagner-Peyser Agricultural Outreach Plan
Program Year 2013
July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014**



**Workforce and Career Development Division
Agricultural Services Unit**

June 2013

Wagner-Peyser Agricultural Outreach Plan for PY 2013 (July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014)

Customer Needs Assessment:

Washington is next only to Florida and California in average agriculture employment with 99,400 agricultural production and support workers (3% of the state workforce) servicing nearly 300 crops in 2011. The state ranks 14th in agricultural production, but the industry's significance to Washington's economy is far reaching, topping \$7.1 billion in raw products and as much as \$35 billion combined for the entire agriculture and food industry sector. Ensuring the adequate supply of labor to the agricultural industry continues to be a focus for the Employment Security Department (ESD) as it plans to continue vigorous outreach to growers and Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) for PY 2013 and beyond.

Farm labor is concentrated in the arid and sunny central and eastern regions of the state. Abundant irrigated acreage continues to develop around the Bureau of Reclamation's massive Columbia Basin Project, which allows for the production of high value and labor-intensive fruit crops. The cool lowlands on the western side of the state, mainly in Skagit County, have also seen modest growth in berries and nearly 90 other crops that merit outreach to ensure labor and farm worker needs are met.

Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers are essential for a large part of Washington agricultural production and will continue to be needed, especially in the critical peak months of July and September. On a human level, MSFWs are semi-skilled hands that bring us the fruit of their hard labor— fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry and other sustenance. Legal and language barriers, lack of steady work, poor housing conditions for too many, low literacy, health care risks, and a lack of payroll benefits in the industry all contribute to a need for supportive services. MSFW organizations, including WorkSource offices, provide outreach and assistance to MSFWs and their families. For all service providers, including WorkSource, an ongoing challenge is adequately enumerating the service population of MSFWs. This has been particularly challenging for health care providers trying to establish baseline resources for community farmworker clinics.

MSFW Enumeration in Washington State:

One important issue for WorkSource and industry is the availability of seasonal farm workers in Washington. There are several studies that have produced varying estimates of seasonal farm workers in Washington, strengthening the notion that a precise measurement of the number of MSFWs is difficult to obtain. The most current enumeration study based on a *demand for labor model* done for Migrant Health Centers in 2000 arrived at an estimate of 176,044 MSFWs. Meanwhile, the Northwest Regional Primary Care Association published a 2011 Farmworker Population Profile showing about a 30-70 split between 71,860 migrant and 157,400 seasonal farm workers in Washington for a total of 229,260 MSFWs. While these studies are noteworthy, ESD presently relies on seasonal agricultural workforce data published by our Labor Market and Economic Analysis (LMEA) Division, who reported that the number of MSFWs in Washington State for calendar year 2012 peaked at 94,980 in the month of July.

Agricultural Labor Situation:

Through the lens of economics, farm “labor shortages” in Washington steadily declined from upwards of 6.6 percent in the summer of 2007 to no shortage reported through most of 2010. This would indicate an adequate labor supply at present to meet growers’ needs. Average inflation-adjusted wages for agricultural workers were relatively flat between 2004 and 2010, which also tends to signify a balance between supply and demand.

A labor shortage was reported in the summer and fall of 2011, peaking at 8.6 percent in September. The shortage was generally concentrated in Yakima, Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, and Kittitas counties. Part of the irregularity in 2011 was due to a cold, wet spring that pushed the harvest back on several crops, resulting in an exceptional overlap of pear and apple varieties. WorkSource significant agricultural offices increased communications with growers to assess the day by day crop harvest conditions, and made all possible efforts to access traditional and non-traditional labor pools within affected communities.

Agriculturally-significant WorkSource offices continued to proactively serve MSFW’s and agricultural employers as concerns continued about another potential labor shortage in 2012. While spot shortages were reported throughout the state, average inflation-adjusted wages for agricultural workers were relatively flat, signifying a balance between supply and demand.

While each season brings its challenges, Washington’s agricultural industry continues to grow in importance. One reason is Washington’s increasing importance as a key agricultural exporter to expanding populations and economies in the Pacific Rim and beyond. Expanding business relationships to market and sell Washington produce, in large part, drive international initiatives to implement sustainable farming practices. One such standards group is Global G.A.P, which sets standards and issues certifications for farm producers worldwide. Common concerns across the world to ensure food quality, safety and environmental protection will have no small impact on farm worker skills needed to carry out high quality farming practices.

In response, WorkSource services to growers and farm workers need to continue to grow as well. WorkSource, the National Farmworker Jobs Program grantees, and others that serve farm workers and keep up with industry skill requirements will need to better integrate services to achieve higher standards in the industry.

Proposed MSFW Outreach Activities and Numeric Goals for Planned Outreach Contacts

Knowledgeable and resourceful MSFW staff stationed in WorkSource one stop centers and affiliate sites strengthen customer service in federally-designated significant agricultural locations.

Table 1: PY 2013 MSFW Staff by WorkSource Office and MSFW Share of Job Seekers

WorkSource Office (City)	Serving Significant Agricultural Counties	MSFW Staff FTE	MSFW Share of All Job Seekers
WS Skagit (Mount Vernon)	Skagit, Whatcom	1.0	8%
WS Central Basin (Moses Lake)	Grant, Adams	2.0	33%
WS Okanogan County (Omak)	Okanogan/North Douglas	1.0	18%
WS Wenatchee Affiliate	Chelan/South Douglas	2.0	16%
WS Yakima	Yakima , Kittitas	1.0	12%
WS Sunnyside	Yakima	1.0	34%
WS Columbia Gorge (White Salmon)	Klickitat	1.0	13%
WS Columbia Basin (Kennewick)	Benton/Franklin	2.0	13%
WS Walla Walla	Walla Walla	1.0	14%
	Total	12.0	

WorkSource MSFW and business services staff along with the WIA 167 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker partner agency will continue to provide services to agricultural employers and MSFWs that are demand-driven and consistent with ESD's mission to help Washington's workers and employers succeed in the global economy by delivering quality services. As required by 20 CFR Subpart B, 653.101, WorkSource will ensure that MSFWs are offered the same range of employment services, benefits and protections, including counseling, testing and job training referral services, as are provided to non-MSFWs. To assure statewide compliance, ESD will make every effort to achieve the federal requirements for "qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate services" to MSFWs.

As a form of engaging MSFWs in the WorkSource centers, MSFW outreach staff will make monthly reports to the State Monitor Advocate on their efforts to contact, inform, and educate MSFWs. These outreach efforts will include, but not be limited to, contacts with local public Spanish and English media such as television, radio, newspapers, classroom training sessions, community service agencies and organizations, churches, and places where MSFWs live, work or gather. Labor camps, employer sites, public housing, businesses and educational institutions will be included. Wage and Hour Division sessions will be offered at WorkSource centers.

The majority of MSFWs are not reached through normal office intake activities. Resources are directed through ESD's budget for specialized staff dedicated to outreach activities to MSFWs on a year-round basis in significant agricultural offices. In the middle of PY 2011, reduced budgets forced tough staff decisions. As a result, MSFW staffing levels fell from 15.0 to 12.0 FTEs. A reduced budget continued to force tough decisions in the spring of 2013 with another agency staff reduction. Staff reductions were made in other programs but the 12 FTEs for MSFW

Outreach were kept at the current level, representing the strong commitment of Governor Jay Inslee to agricultural services in Washington.

Table 2: PY 2013 Planned MSFW Outreach Contracts per Significant Office

WorkSource Significant Agricultural Office	PY 13 MSFW ESD Staff FTE	PY 2013 MSFW Planned Outreach Contracts		
		Mass Event Contacts	Individual/ Small Group Contacts	Total Outreach Contacts Planned
WDA 3				
WorkSource Skagit (Mount Vernon)	1.0	300	510	810
WDA 8				
WorkSource Wenatchee Affiliate	2.0	1,000	800	1,800
WorkSource Central Basin (Moses Lake)	2.0	1,800	1,100	2,900
WorkSource Okanogan (Omak)	1.0	100	700	800
WDA 9				
WorkSource Yakima	1.0	1,300	600	1,900
WorkSource Sunnyside	1.0	772	772	1,544
WorkSource Columbia Gorge (White Salmon)	1.0	200	730	930
WDA 10				
WorkSource Walla Walla	1.0	1,600	400	2,000
WDA 11				
WorkSource Columbia Basin (Kennewick)	2.0	700	280	980
TOTAL	12.0	7,772	5,892	13,664

Table 3: PY 2013 Planned MSFW Outreach Contacts & Days by Month and Office

Significant Ag. Office	Contacts	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
Skagit	Contacts	100	100	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	75	75	100	800
	Days	15	15	10	10	10	10	10	10	12	15	15	15	147
Wenatchee	Contacts	160	90	90	70	60	40	40	40	60	60	1,000	90	1800
	Days	10	5	5	5	3	2	2	2	4	5	5	10	58
Moses Lake	Contacts	300	500	500	550	300	25	25	25	75	100	200	300	2900
	Days	15	18	30	30	16	5	5	5	20	30	34	35	243
Okanogan	Contacts	75	75	75	75	50	50	50	50	75	75	75	75	800
	Days	15	15	15	15	10	10	10	10	15	15	15	15	160
Yakima	Contacts	200	200	200	200	100	100	100	100	150	150	200	200	1900
	Days	12	12	12	12	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	12	102
Sunnyside	Contacts	107	142	160	160	125	100	100	100	100	135	155	160	1544
	Days	8	10	12	12	12	8	8	8	10	10	10	12	120
White Salmon	Contacts	130	100	150	100	60	40	40	30	30	50	50	100	880
	Days	8	10	8	8	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	8	71
Walla Walla	Contacts	300	300	170	150	100	100	100	100	100	180	200	200	2000
	Days	10	10	9	6	3	0	1	1	7	10	12	11	80
Kennewick	Contacts	120	100	120	120	30	30	30	30	100	100	100	100	980
	Days	12	10	12	12	8	5	5	5	10	10	10	12	111

Services for MSFW:

All MSFWs who visit a WorkSource site will be informed of the various types of employment and training services and other social services available in their community and in other parts of the state. MSFWs will be given a menu of various training options offered through the state-formula WIA programs, adult and youth, community colleges, and state agency programs.

Outreach proves most effective as WorkSource and its partners maintain and improve the menu of services that MSFWs value. WorkSource direct employment assessment and placement is primarily tailored to MSFW needs through the expertise of MSFW staff in the nine significant agricultural offices.

Concurrent enrollments with partner agencies and colleges are assessed for individuals who may benefit. A key partner in these efforts is the WIA 167 grantee, the National Farmworker Job Program (NFJP), which is currently the OIC of Washington. Their offices are located in key locations where agricultural activity is greatest, including some co-locations in One-Stops. Joint

employer-NFJP sponsored vocational skills workshops, such as pesticide license, ladder safety, etc., are co-sponsored by the partners. The training pathway for ESL, high school equivalency certificates, and career and technical education (vocational training) is primarily through partnering with the WIA 167 grantee and community colleges. Community colleges in agricultural areas continue to provide Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) for higher level ESL adults. The I-BEST model has dual instructors for language and vocational skills leading directly to a variety of certificates (e.g., CDL, welding, office technology) and agricultural or non-agricultural jobs.

To fill skill gaps, ESD has invested in statewide licenses for on-line work skills improvement using KeyTrain and SkillSoft training modules for access to the Microsoft e-learning library. WorkSource Wenatchee is in its third year offering Spanish computer classes. This experience has introduced MSFWs to digital media and a new world of information – some for the first time in their lives. The computer classes have helped digitally-illiterate customers use computers and gain much needed keyboarding skills. Some have progressed to Microsoft Word and Outlook. Students are encouraged to attend Job Hunter workshops offered in Spanish. The plan is to continue the computer workshops in Wenatchee and other offices and integrate flexible work skills learning with other more traditional WorkSource services.

The need for inter-office communications and cross training is crucial. ESD headquarters, also affected by reductions, is encouraging decentralized training by available subject matter experts in the field. Strategic and operational partnerships will become even more important in PY 2013. Partnerships will be fostered through statewide and local meetings to integrate services across organizations and facilitate events such as hiring or local MSFW resource fairs.

Services are also enhanced by one or more bi-lingual/bi-cultural labor exchange staffs in significant agricultural offices. This is particularly crucial because MSFW staff spend the majority of their time, especially during the six months of the growing season between April and October, providing outreach to MSFWs and agricultural employers in the field.

It is recognized that MSFWs are a population that are difficult to serve due to barriers such as limited English proficiency and low educational attainment. In recognition of these barriers and in light of a reduced budget, ESD will continue to leverage key partnerships. These partnerships will play a critical role in ensuring that MSFWs continue to access more stable employment opportunities.

Services to Agricultural Employers through the One-Stop System:

ESD maintains a statewide Agricultural Services Unit (ASU) under the direction of the Program Administration Director. The ASU is supported by a State Program Coordinator who guides service delivery through oversight of grants administration and the State Monitor Advocate who assures compliance. This oversight is accomplished, in part, through bi-weekly statewide conference calls during the agricultural harvest season for MSFW staff to share information with one another and the ASU on crop and labor activity, for the ASU to provide technical assistance and training, and for MSFW staff and the ASU to discuss ways to continually improve services to growers and farm workers. The ASU also provides an annual, full-day training session for all

MSFW supervisors and staff in advance of the agricultural season. Furthermore, workgroups regularly form in both central office and the field to address strategic and operational concerns impacting both growers and farm workers.

Significant resources are also dedicated to providing nationally-recognized labor market products developed by ESD's Labor Market and Economic Analysis (LMEA) Branch, including the annual *Agricultural Workforce in Washington* report. An LMEA survey team also gathers quarterly employment and wage data for agriculture employers and workers and publishes monthly agricultural reports in season. Employment data for all employers and job seekers can be accessed at <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/>.

Agricultural employers may list a local, seasonal job order in the online self-service system at <http://Go2WorkSource.com>. However, employers are encouraged to place staff-assisted job orders --- a more effective way to facilitate active recruitment.

More growers who have access to housing are choosing to use the H-2A program. Under H-2A, ESD places an intrastate clearance order and actively recruits U.S. workers interested in working under contract for the season. H-2A employers must hire all willing, able, qualified, and available U.S. workers who apply through 50 percent of the contract period. If more housing becomes available, it is anticipated that more growers will choose to use H-2A, despite the added costs and guarantees it requires for farm workers, to provide them with a stable, legal workforce.

Identified in the top five states with significant MSFW applicants and highest estimated MSFW activity in the country, Washington makes every effort to provide timely and equitable services to agricultural employers. ESD assists agricultural employers who anticipate a shortage of workers or have an adequate labor supply.

As noted, local ESD staff members have close working relationships with agricultural employers. These relationships are especially beneficial for communicating the need for workers day by day during key harvest periods. In addition, members of the Washington State Farm Bureau, Washington State Clearinghouse, and Washington Growers League are in contact with the State office in Olympia where issues and concerns that have a statewide impact are addressed.

Additionally, in response to Governor Inslee's call for more responsive and efficient state government, ESD and the state's Department of Agriculture are leading efforts to organize a state-level committee that represents all functions of state government that serve the agriculture sector. The intent is to enhance coordination among state agencies and increase communication with key agricultural stakeholders. The committee will assemble for its initial meeting in July 2013 with the goal of identifying key subject matter experts (SME) and subsequently establishing an SME contact list. That meeting will also serve as a jumping-off point for increasing communication with agricultural employers through state-led quarterly conference calls and ensuring state agency coordination on future projects.